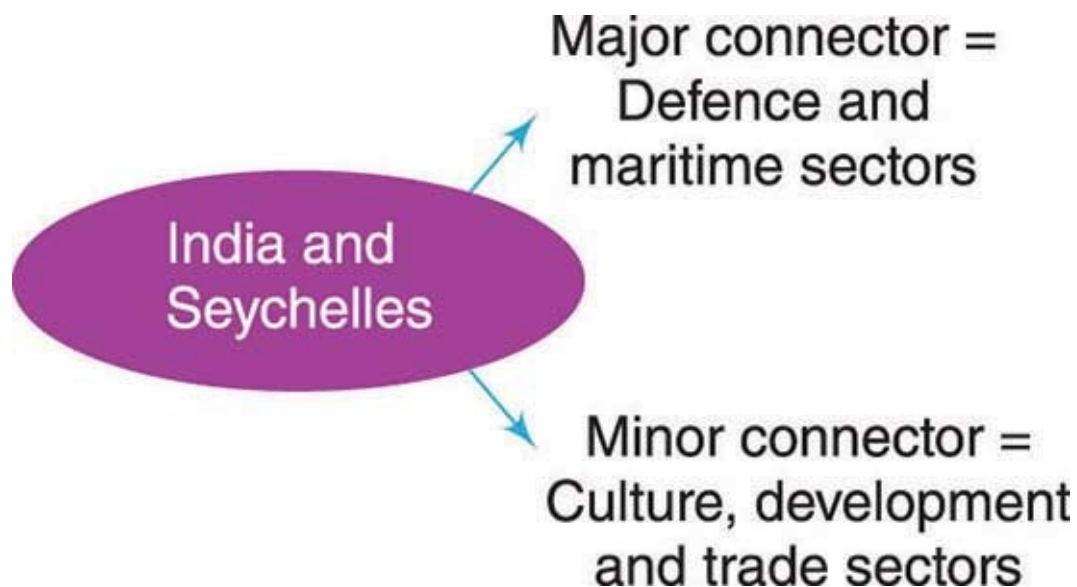


After reading the chapter, the reader will be able to develop an analytical understanding on the following:

- Historical Background
- Defence Diplomacy
- Analysis of Indian PM's visit to Seychelles in 2015

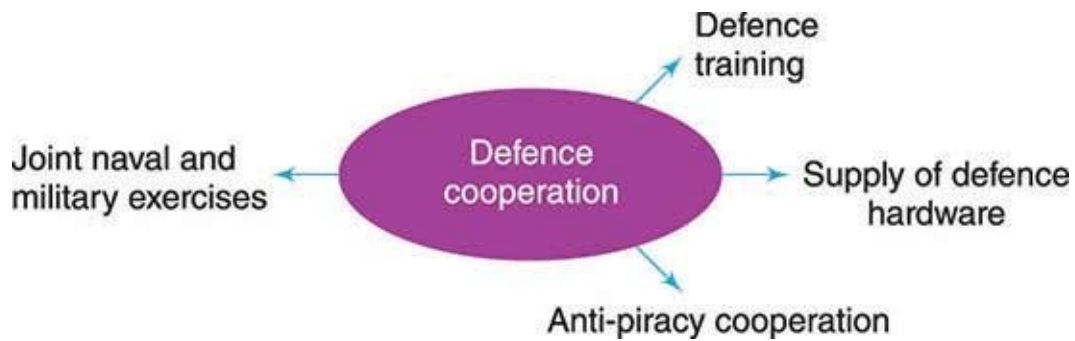
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Seychelles is an island territory comprising of 115 islands. Since 1794, it had been a colony of the British. From 1794 till 1903, Seychelles was administered by the British from Mauritius. From 1903 onward, Seychelles came to be governed as a separate British colony. Seychelles gained independence from the British in 1976. In the same year, India established its relations with Seychelles and opened a diplomatic mission in 1979. Seychelles witnessed a visit by Indian PM Indira Gandhi in 1981.



DEFENCE DIPLOMACY

The most important component of India–Seychelles relationship is defence cooperation, which functions on multiple levels.



India has been providing training to the Seychelles People's Defence Forces (SPDF). The SPDF contingents are regularly provided with theoretical and on-ground training by India. India is a part of 25 nation combined task force established to tackle piracy emerging out of coast of Bahrain. Piracy is also rampant in East Africa and the island states are crucial in the fight against piracy.



India, in its attempt to fight piracy in East Africa, has assisted Seychelles in bolstering its counter piracy capabilities. Seychelles also funds India as a stable and a non-threatening ally for maritime security. India has sent naval ships to Seychelles on its request in 2009 to assist Seychelles's fight against piracy. In fact, back in 2006, India had gifted Seychelles INS Tarmugli, which was inducted by Seychelles as Ps Topaz. India, in 2014, also gifted INS Tarasa to Seychelles which was a ship for naval surveillance and patrolling.



Operation 'Flowers are Blooming' and R&AW in Seychelles

Seychelles was one the most hotly contested territories during the Cold War. The US wanted to establish a military base in Seychelles. Even Russian wanted a base in Seychelles to challenge the USA's military base in Diego Garcia. Seychelles defended its territory very powerfully during that period to ensure that neither of the two powers succeeded in their goal. In 1977, a socialist leader, Albert Rene, gained power in Seychelles through a military coup. Since then, a lot of attempts of coup were made in Seychelles to remove Albert Rene. A most embarrassing situation had emerged in 1981 when a South African secret service agent, Hick Hoare, had landed in Seychelles disguised as a businessman but his plan was unfolded the moment the security agencies of Seychelles discovered huge cache of arms in his check-in baggage. Hick Hoare hijacked an Air India plane AI-707 aircraft and flew to Johannesburg. Finally, to put an end to repeated coup attempts, Albert Rene decided to ask for help from India. In 1986, the R&AW station officer advised Albert Rene that his own Defence Ministry Qgilvy was planning a coup. Albert Rene had a dialogue with the then Indian PM (Indira Gandhi) who handed over the matter to

Admiral RH Tahiliani and R&AW officials. In close conference between Indian navy and the R&AW, it was decided that India would dispatch INS Vindhyagiri to Seychelles to participate in the National Day celebrations of Seychelles. The plan was that the moment INS Vindhyagiri would reach Seychelles, it would plant a request to increase its stay in Seychelles due to an engineering defect on board.

The operation was given its code name, 'Flowers are blooming'. INS Vindhyagiri reached Seychelles and reported the engineering defect and requested an increased stay, which was subsequently granted. In the next 12 days, during the INS Vindhyagiri's stay in Seychelles, the deck of the ship was used for aggressive power projections, conveying to the defence minister Qgilvy the clear consequences of a coup. The 12-day presence achieved the objective and Qgilvy left Seychelles and a coup was averted. Followed by this, in 1989, India established the Seychelles Defence Academy and began to strengthen the defence cooperation between the two nations.

ANALYSIS OF INDIAN PM'S VISIT TO SEYCHELLES—2015

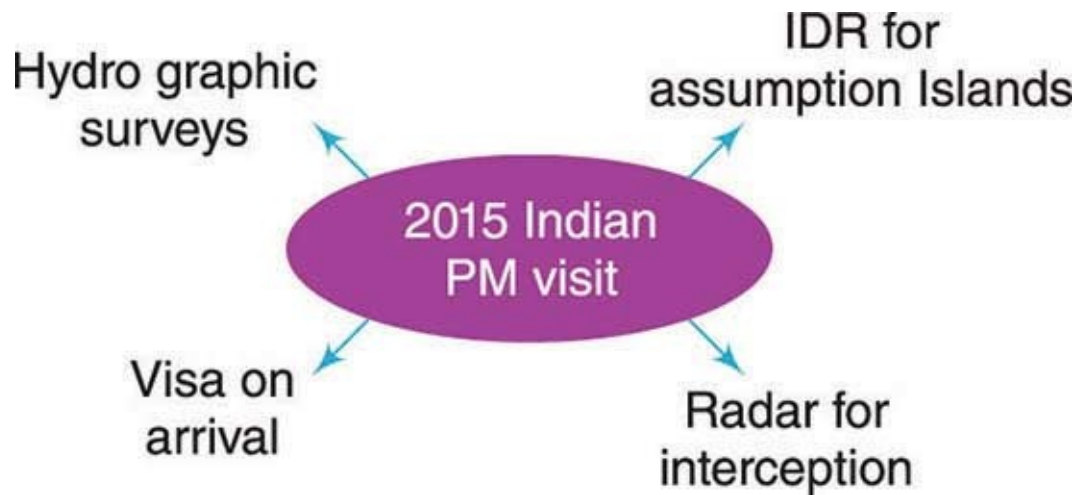
Considering the strategic significance of Seychelles, the Indian PM paid a state visit to the country in 2015. The visit was to bolster the concept of blue economy. India had helped Seychelles to have a complete track of all naval ship movements in the region. The PM also concluded a pact on undertaking hydrographic survey and to provide a three months free visa-on-arrival for citizens of Seychelles to India.

The two nations have, since 2001, established a high level Joint Defence Coordination Committee. This committee is responsible for regular joint military exercises between the two nations. In February 2016, the 7th India–Seychelles military exercises, LAMITYE 2016, was organised in Victoria. The word lamitye, in the local Creole language, means friendship. The two nations undertook anti-piracy simulated exercise.



Infrastructure Development Rights (IDR) of Assumption Islands, 2015

Assumption Islands are islands with an area of 11.74 square kilometres, counted amongst the Aldabra group of islands. These islands are very popular amongst scientists who come to study the giant tortoises at Aldabra islands. India has got IDR for Assumption Islands. India will help in establishing a new jetty terminal, refurbish the airstrip and establish a forward base for the coast guard of Seychelles with all modern facilities. These developments will equip Seychelles with more power to help protect the tortoise species in the region and will also allow India to exert geopolitical influence in the Oceanic region.



India also extends lines of credit to Seychelles and had assisted Seychelles in skill training under ITEC. Since 1978, Bank of Baroda has been present in Seychelles. Tata and Ashok Leyland in automobile and Airtel in telecom are common names. Under Ran Africa E-network project, hospital connectivity has been provided for. Approximately eight per cent of Seychelles's population descends from Indians, making our culture and values those that are commonly shared and nurtured.